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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000684

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LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: ERITREA REFLECTS ON ARUSHA AND THE NEGOTIATIONS  
FOR DARFUR

Classified By: CDA Holly C. Holzer, for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On August 13 Charge met with People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) Political Chief and lead Sudan interlocutor for Eritrea, Yemane Ghebreab, to discuss the Eritrean views of the August 3 ) 6 meetings in Arusha. Yemane described the meetings as having gone "very well" and stressed the need to maintain the current momentum. Yemane offered his assessment of some of the individual leaders and movements, and commented on Libya's unhelpful role. While Eritrea continues to see itself as a contender for hosting the negotiations, Yemane elected not to promote the value of Asmara as the location during the discussion. Despite this meeting occurring in the days following the U.S. notification of the closure of the Eritrean Consulate in Oakland, Yemane made no comment on the USG action, an indicator perhaps the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) truly intends to keep discussions on Sudan separate from bi-lateral issues. End Summary.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE ARUSHA  
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¶2. (C) Yemane repeatedly commented during the conversation that the Arusha conference had gone "very well" and observed that this was the "most progress in a very long while." He relayed that the Eritreans, like others, stayed "on the fringes" of the conversation to allow the Darfurians to work out their common platform and initial negotiating positions. Yemane said he pushed for the negotiations to take place in September but that the Darfurians had requested more time. According to Yemane, the Darfurians agreed that the Dafur Peace Agreement's Declaration of Principals were an acceptable foundation for the talks. He did note that while the Dafurians could start from there, they needed to "get to the talks and find a way forward."

¶3. (C) Yemane stated that the main challenges for the Darfurians is creating a unified platform and not losing momentum. Only by ceasing what he called "internal bickering" and finding what unites them will the Darfurians be successful. He said that the movements may meet before the negotiations to prepare themselves, but at this time there are no formal plans to bring the Darfurians together. He revealed that some members of the United Front for Liberation and Development (aka Asmara Group) have returned to Asmara, but individuals such as Yahia Abdallah and Khamis

Abdallah have not returned.

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THE SPLM'S ROLE  
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14. (C) Yemane shared that the Eritreans have backed away from a separate Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) conference for the Darfurians. According to him, the meeting held in Juba after Arusha was, for now, sufficient. He did not expect the SPLM to plan other meetings specifically for the Darfurians, although he did mention that perhaps they might do "something for the tribal leaders and civil society." Yemane went on, stating that the SPLM now must "focus on their role in the negotiating team as part of the Government of National Unity (GNU)." In the past, Yemane expressed that the Eritreans wanted the SPLM to be the GNU's primary interlocutor on Darfur, yet, when asked about this he did not answer directly, speaking instead of the National Congress Party's suspicion of the SPLM in the Darfur process.

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REGIONAL PARTNERS AND VENUES  
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15. (C) Yemane did not openly press for the talks to be held in Asmara. He clearly stated that he anticipated the talks would be held in one of the three regional capitals ) Asmara, N'djamena or Tripoli. He further described Libya as not "showing leadership." (Comment: According to Egyptian colleagues in Asmara, the Eritreans are lobbying very hard behind the scenes to build support for Eritrea to host the negotiations. End Comment.)

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REACHING KHALIL AND ABDUL WAHID  
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16. (C) When asked about Khalil's (Justice and Equality Movement) failure to come to Arusha, Yemane smugly remarked he knew Khalil, despite his promises, would not come to Arusha. He observed that Khalil "wants to make himself big" and did not attend Arusha because "this is part of the games he likes to play." He said that Khalil seems more interested in the internal issues of JEM and its position rather than adjusting to the reality of negotiations.

17. (C) As for Abdul Wahid, Yemane said he must continue to be invited to talks but that no special accommodations should be made for him. He commented, "If he comes, he comes. If he shies away he becomes irrelevant. Don't make him feel indispensable." He further explained that Abdul Wahid's involvement now might be more trouble and that waiting until later in the process would make Abdul Wahid more "manageable and realistic."

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Comment: Yemane seemed more at ease and readily revealed more about Eritrean positions on negotiations and players than he had in previous conversations. Moreover, he appeared almost enthusiastic about Arusha and the prospects for negotiation. Eritrea clearly anticipates that the negotiations will be held in the region, and while not openly stated, they continue to maneuver to place Asmara at the top of the list. Eritrea also seems to be backing away from their previous pressuring of the NCP to have the SPLM take on a leadership role in the Darfur negotiations and now is using their influence over the SPLM to ensure that the SPLM is organized and prepared for negotiations. Finally, despite this conversation taking place in the aftermath of the Oakland Consulate closure, the lack of comment by Yemane on the subject indicates that GSE may truly understand that they need the U.S. support ) or at least not enmity - in the

GSE's agenda for Darfur. At this point post believes the GSE will not let poor bi-lateral relations derail their efforts in Darfur or the peace process. End Comment.  
HOLZER